

MUSIC

Paper 9703/01
Listening

Key messages

- Write clearly, both in terms of English and handwriting.
- Use specific musical examples that are clearly recognisable.
- Read the question carefully and make sure the response is entirely relevant.
- Follow the rubric of the paper.

General comments

The general standard has shown a continued improvement, especially amongst candidates taking the paper for the 8663 syllabus. The best responses were certainly of a very high standard, and there was some very mature thinking and extensive musical experience in evidence in the best work. Many candidates had clearly diligently and keenly studied the Prescribed and Core works, knew them in fine detail, and were able to construct intelligent and focused responses. Some candidates could have provided greater detail in the discussion questions in particular. These candidates' musical experience also required expanding to inform their responses better.

Most papers delved straight into answering the question, where some others unnecessarily included much irrelevant information in lengthy introductions or conclusions, which did not add anything significant to the response, and sometimes directly repeated information already stated. It is also unnecessary to write the question out at the beginning of the response, and any planning should be crossed out, else it will be marked.

Handwriting was generally legible and the standard of English was mostly good, which greatly aids Examiners' understanding. In rare cases where meaning was unclear, either due to expression or illegibility, it was not possible for Examiners to award full credit; this highlights the importance of clarity.

The tendency for unasked-for 'blow-by-blow' commentaries was further reduced this session, with candidates managing to highlight significant features instead. **Section A**, with its requirement for a more detailed familiarity with the set works, was sometimes less well-answered than **Section B** and **C** questions. In some cases, the brevity of responses (e.g. fewer than three sentences) prevented candidates from being able to demonstrate sufficient familiarity; there were also some longer responses which avoided relevant points.

Section A

This section requires close familiarity with the prescribed works; the best responses used vivid commentaries and well-chosen examples to answer the question relevantly. Candidates should be reminded that referring to timings on recordings is not helpful, as the Examiner will not necessarily have access to the same recording; relating examples to where they sit in the overall structure or sequence of events, as well as in relation to each other, will make references perfectly clear. The use of bar numbers is also not required, and these should only be used if memorised, as scores are not allowed in the examination.

1. This was a very popular choice for candidates, many of whom were obviously more comfortable with writing a commentary than picking out significant features from a longer movement or piece. There was generally a good level of familiarity demonstrated with the variations, with a few candidates becoming confused over the numbering of variations (e.g. treating Variation I as if it were II, and therefore not commenting on IV as required). Very few candidates were able to make the connection between the harmonic outline of the variations and the theme. The best responses were able to articulate clearly the role and music of each instrument in the variations.

2. This was almost equal in popularity with **Question 3**. Many candidates gave an uneven account, focusing more on either the Haydn or the Mozart, with stronger responses offering a clear overview of the characteristics of both (with specific musical examples) and a straightforward comparison. Overall, the Mozart seemed less secure, with some candidates struggling to explain the form. More practice comparing music is recommended for future candidates preparing for this examination.
3. Few candidates were able to enumerate the instruments of each orchestra, and some floundered in descriptions of the first movements without providing important examples of the *use* of instruments in different ways (the third movements were richer in relevant examples). A small number of candidates were able to write knowledgeably about the expansion of the orchestra under Beethoven and offer pertinent examples from his fourth movement.

Section B

Although close familiarity with Core Works is to be commended, the strongest candidates showed familiarity with a wider range of repertoire where it was required by the question. In order to show a well-developed understanding, candidates need to relate musical features and techniques to their effects consistently and convincingly.

4. This question was not attempted by the majority of candidates, and those that attempted it often offered an uneven explanation, focusing more on the Smetana. A good number of candidates interpreted 'countryside' erroneously as referring to the river itself; such comments were disregarded. Similarly, commentary on the weather in the Berlioz was irrelevant (e.g. thunder). A focus on the hunting scene, the wedding, and St John's Rapids in *Vltava*, and the pastoral aspects of *Scène aux champs* were characteristics of stronger responses.
5. Comparatively few candidates answered this question, and it was generally not well-answered. Some had difficulty selecting an appropriate piece for comparison, and a very small number tried to compare both the Debussy and the Smetana, thereby answering only half the question. There was also some confusion over what constitutes '20th-century', with some earlier, inappropriate choices offered, more so in style than any strict historical interpretation. Especially problematic was a tendency to write about popular songs, as candidates focused on lyrics rather than musical features, which were often unrelated to 'night' or the lyrics in any meaningful way.
6. This was the most popular question in **Section B** and generally well-answered. Candidates showed strong familiarity with *Un bal* and the appearances of the *idée fixe*, with discrimination shown through the detail of descriptions and the link to effect. There was much peripheral information provided, but so long as these examples were related to the artist's obsession, they were counted as evidence of understanding. There were some particularly vivid descriptions of the ending of *Marche au supplice*, which candidates obviously enjoyed.

Section C

The best candidates organised their thoughts logically and presented them in an orderly essay, point by point, each illustrated by reference to relevant musical matters, drawn from study of a wide range of repertoire and personal experience.

7. This question was moderately popular, although few managed to cover the full scope of it. The most common observation was about Weidinger's trumpet and the clarinet, with some examples related to the repertoire. Very few candidates wrote thoroughly about how music was *heard* or about developments in communication technology, and most responses skimmed over a variety of considerations unconvincingly.
8. This was a popular question, and was often well-answered. Occasionally, candidates were very confused about the basic definition of 'texture', writing instead about articulation, for example. The very best responses, of which there were several, gave clear and straightforward definitions of a variety of common textures and exemplified these with reference to specific musical examples, some more apt than others and drawn from an impressive range of periods, traditions and styles.
9. This question was also fairly popular, with candidates drawing heavily on their own experience and listening, which is to be commended. The best responses considered a wide range of examples of what

can, should or should not be changed, with some nuanced opinions. Some struggled to go beyond very basic, one-sided examples and express a firm opinion.

10. Candidates answering this question generally had a good knowledge of the construction of the piano. Most were able to identify some different roles for the piano, and the best responses additionally provided some very pertinent examples of these roles, drawing on Western classical and modern, popular styles.

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Paper 9703/02
Practical Musicianship

Key messages

- Element 1 introductions and performances should be recorded as one continuous track and focus primarily on the candidate being assessed. Face, hands, feet (if appropriate) and the instrument must be clearly visible.
- Introductions to Element 1 should inform the recital programme, not merely announce the titles of the pieces.
- The **two** skills offered in Element 2 should be distinct from each other and different from those presented in Element 1.
- Submissions for Element 3 should include marked work, with informative teacher comments, and be arranged in chronological order.
- Element 4 compositions should be for two or more instruments and include a short written commentary for each piece submitted.

General comments

The overall standard in this component was very good, and from the sheer variety of work submitted, it was evident that most candidates had worked to their strengths. Before coursework is submitted, Centres should ensure that marks are correctly added up and all relevant paperwork is included in the package. Copies of all the music performed should always be included for Element 1 and for the final performances of Element 2. Both the syllabus and the Guidance Notes (available on the CIE Teacher Support website) have detailed information about the submission of coursework and teachers are advised to refresh their knowledge before completing the assessment process. Recordings were generally of a high standard, but it is worth doing a preliminary sound check to ensure an appropriate aural balance between candidate and accompanying instrument(s). A small number of DVD's and CD's would not play: it is always prudent to check discs – preferably on more than one machine – before packing up the coursework.

Element 1 was presented by most candidates and there were some outstanding performances on a wide range of instruments and in an eclectic variety of styles. Moderators were delighted to see many examples of world musics and Centres are reminded that they can modify the assessment criteria in order to accommodate different cultures and traditions if necessary. Occasionally, candidates played music that was technically too challenging. Although the recital should show evidence of a range of skills, it is always better to choose repertoire that is well within the capability of the performer as there is no specific syllabus requirement regarding the difficulty of the music presented. Candidates may, however, benefit from teacher assistance in planning the recital programme effectively: some performances might have benefited from being a little shorter, particularly if the candidate started to tire; whilst a few were too short to address all the assessment criteria.

The spoken introduction is a requirement of the Element, and is assessed in Criterion E of the mark scheme. Candidates should include detail about the background, musical content and technical aspects of the pieces they have chosen to perform. This can be presented in its entirety at the beginning of the recital, or each piece can be introduced separately. Either approach is appropriate: it was clear that the best introductions had engaged candidates and made them think carefully about their forthcoming recital.

Element 2 enables candidates to extend their practical skills and Moderators saw many enthusiastic performances across all the disciplines. Two *clearly* different skills must be offered, with three separate, and dated, recordings for each on the DVD. There was much good practice here, with candidates accompanying other candidates offering second instruments; candidates rehearsing and directing each other in candidate ensembles and candidates improvising in a wide variety of styles. However, common problems included candidates who presented skills that were basically the same as Element 1; candidates who performed the

same music, on the same instrument, for both 'Accompanying' and 'Performing in an Ensemble' and candidates who only recorded one performance in each discipline, but were awarded extremely high marks.

Other examples of good practice include:

- Detailed comments on the Working Mark Sheet to support the marks awarded for each discipline.
- Clear evidence of progress demonstrated across the three recordings for each discipline.
- Submissions which demonstrate the full range of assessment criteria for each discipline.
- DVD tracks arranged chronologically for each discipline, with 3 separate recordings for each.
- Candidates clearly visually identified, particularly in a large ensemble, or in a recording that is filmed from a distance.
- Copies of the music provided for the final assessment in each discipline.

Element 3 was offered by relatively few Centres, but there was much evidence of careful preparation by teachers and enthusiastic engagement on the part of candidates. Most had followed appropriate courses, covering a range of relevant techniques. Centres are free to choose the tradition in which exercises are framed, but it is important that work submitted should be based on actual *named* repertoire. Candidates should always be working with at least one given part, which should be clearly identified, and exercises should be marked (including teacher comments) and arranged chronologically. There is no set number of exercises, but Centres should ensure that there are enough worked examples to show progress, and examples should be long enough to demonstrate understanding of the techniques learned during the course. Increasing the length and complexity of the exercise as the course progresses can be a useful approach. Re-drafts can be helpful, but are not essential.

Submissions should not be pastiche compositions, without an incipit; neither should candidates create the given part themselves. Centres are reminded that a clear outline of the course undertaken for Element 3 should be submitted with the folios.

There was a great variety of work submitted in **Element 4** and commentaries often revealed an enthusiastic engagement with composing and a willingness to experiment and refine as the course progressed. The best folios showed familiarity with at least one genre and a technical understanding of the instruments deployed, coupled with the ability to effectively structure, extend and repeat material to create music which was both memorable and imaginative. Most candidates used some form of music technology, and this clearly assisted the compositional process in both score production and recording. However, there were many live performances too, and it was enjoyable to hear candidates so intimately involved with their own work. Common pitfalls – which tended to place work in the middle or lower bands – included scores which did not name instruments, used them in an unidiomatic way or omitted dynamic and expressive markings; compositions which relied heavily on repetition without development or contrast, and recordings which lacked dynamic or timbral variety. Centres are reminded that compositions should be for at least **two** instruments and that there should be a written commentary for each piece of work which outlines any specific musical influences and informs the compositional process. If a score is not submitted then the commentary should be a detailed companion to the CD recording. Whilst a score is not mandatory, a recording is compulsory.

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Paper 9703/03
Performing

Key messages

Candidates should select focused repertoire appropriate to their technical capability
Candidates should provide a spoken introduction to their performance showing the ways in which the music relates to their chosen focus

General comments

Most candidates had prepared well for this Component with almost all achieving at least a satisfactory standard and many performing to a high level. There were outstanding recitals on piano, violin, viola, 'cello and electric guitar. Focused repertoire selected by the large number of pianists included music by Mozart, Chopin, Debussy and Yiruma, while other instrumentalists chose music ranging from unaccompanied Bach on 'cello and Saint-Saëns on oboe, to Jazz on saxophone and alternative rock of the 1990s on electric guitar. Singers performed music by Mozart and Fauré, as well as music from Broadway musicals and popular music genres. Some candidates performed recitals based around folk music from their own, and other, countries and a number of candidates played instruments from the Chinese and Caribbean traditions.

The repertoire chosen for performance was, for the most part, well suited to candidates' capabilities and gave them opportunity to demonstrate the full range of their technical ability. Some chose repertoire which was too challenging and were thus limited in their ability to show full aural awareness, stylistic understanding or a real sense of performance.

As is required, most candidates chose an appropriate focus for their performance. However, some had selected repertoire without due attention to how individual pieces might be linked by a single focus.

Most candidates gave an appropriate spoken introduction to their recital. The spoken introduction should give detail of the chosen focus as well as examples of how this is reflected in each of the pieces performed. Some candidates merely listed the pieces they were about to perform and some offered no introduction at all. The quality and relevance of the spoken introduction is assessed in Criterion E: Stylistic Understanding. The full mark range cannot be accessed if there is no introduction. Candidates may read their introduction if they prefer, rather than speaking from memory.

Most Centres provided competent accompanists and suitable venues for the performance to take place. Some candidates performed their individual part without the inclusion of the accompaniment or the vocal/instrumental parts needed to make the piece complete. This takes the music out of context and prevents the candidate from fully demonstrating stylistic understanding of their chosen repertoire. Backing tracks may be used where appropriate live musicians are not available.

Most performances were presented on DVD recordings of good quality and Centres had ensured that individual candidates could be readily identified. In most instances the camera had been placed suitably, ensuring that the performer and their fingers/instrument were clearly visible. Care should be taken in placing microphones, especially when backing tracks are used, to ensure that a good sound balance is achieved.

Centres submitted the work in a manner that was easy to manage and, as is required, most enclosed copies of the music which had been performed. Centres are reminded that each candidate's recital should be recorded as one continuous performance presented on a single occasion.

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<p>Paper 9703/04 Composing</p>
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Key messages

Consult the syllabus and previous reports to centres for comprehensive guidance and to ensure that all requirements are met.
Centres should ensure that candidates take full responsibility for every part of the submission, creatively and administratively.
The content of the submission should represent a year's work in the second year of an A level course.

General comments

Candidates continue to present compositions that are diverse in approach and underpinned by a wealth of wide ranging listening. The majority of submissions were carefully presented with attention paid to meeting the requirements of the syllabus.

Specific comments relating to compositions

Commentaries

Successful commentaries made concise reference to the range of listening and research that had been part of candidates' composing approach. It is not necessary to include a lengthy description of the music as the submission with the recording speaks for itself. Some helpful background to the initial composing concept and insight into compositional decisions should be included in the commentary. Teacher comments cannot be offered in the absence of a commentary. Candidates may choose to include some brief reflection on the outcome of their work but this should not form the only content of the commentary document.

The scope of submissions

Whilst a good range of compositional materials was evidenced in the work, there was a predominance of the idea that music must always be explained in terms of its programmatic or emotional imagery. Examples included themes of love or battle. Programme music is not the only option, however, and candidates are free to consider the structures and principles of 'absolute' music.

Listening range

Teachers are encouraged to give guidance and suggest examples of relevant listening for candidates to explore as they work on their ideas. By building 'aural familiarity' with the style and techniques of the work of composers, candidates are able to incorporate these into their own work in a highly personalised way. This principle is a strong component of the assessment descriptor for 'Materials'.

Listening included film scores, orchestral and chamber music, choral works as well as jazz and contemporary genres. It was also clear that some candidates made successful composing connections with their own instrumental or vocal repertoire as performers as well as with the musicology insights gained from studying specific works as part of the Listening Paper.

Some candidates were drawn to the simple, clean lines of some East Asian animated film scores. One description referred to the 'simple sound, with single piano notes and occasional strings'. Teachers can give advice about the extent to which the emulation of such music can or cannot meet the full requirements of composing at Advanced level.

Materials, Use of Materials

Candidates often showed careful crafting of rhythmic and melodic ideas but were less assured when it came to developing a coherent harmonic language. Some candidates avoided harmonising parts by the exclusive use of melody against repeated pedal lines or unison / octave textures. This was a restricting factor in the range of skills candidates were able to demonstrate. Candidates experimenting with developing their own harmonic language should nevertheless display control and coherence.

Structure

The submission should consist of a single composition or several related pieces conceived as a whole. The relationship between the sections or shorter pieces of the whole should be a musical one. Two pieces entitled 'Spring' and 'Summer' yet entirely different in style and instrumentation do not comply with the spirit of the syllabus. Candidates should avoid submissions consisting of multiple small pieces that do not allow skills of development to be demonstrated.

The length of the overall submission is not a precisely stated requirement due to the possible variation in content of the work. Candidates should ask themselves whether a work of 3 and a half minutes, for example, is of sufficient duration to demonstrate the substance of a year's work.

A submission of longer than eight minutes may have different issues. Is the work too long for its ideas? Does it lack sufficient contrast and development? Would further refinement and pruning of the ideas result in an improved final product?

Use of Medium and Texture

Many candidates wrote idiomatically for the ensembles or voices of their choice and it was pleasing to see a greater level of success with smaller ensembles where attention was given to the textures of lines in combination.

Notation and Presentation

CD recordings of compositions had been thoroughly checked and there were no difficulties accessing the audio submissions for examiners this session. DVD recordings of visual performances should not be sent as the sole means of accessing the work.

Occasionally, scores were difficult to read where ink levels had not been checked before printing. Many scores had been carefully assessed so as to optimise the clarity of the layout.

The use of articulation and phrasing markings is essential in order to show an understanding of the nuances of performance. Improvements could be made here. Once again, the level of detail on the score was often directed at ensuring a good sequenced recording rather than being of usefulness to performers.

There were many live recordings of compositions which brought the composer's intentions to life as well as electro-acoustic work or submissions in popular genres where full attention was given to the quality of the sounds in recording, to the credit of candidates.

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<p>Paper 9703/05 Investigation and report</p>

Key Messages

The focus of the investigation, and therefore the report, should be the study of a body of music. The report should be accompanied by a CD of recordings, which have been investigated. Each report should be accompanied by an Investigation and Report cover sheet, which may be found on the samples database. Both the teacher and the candidate sign the declaration, certifying that the work is entirely the work of the candidate.

General Comments

As always, candidates submitted reports on a wide range of topics, some of which were more successful than others. Examiners look for evidence of engagement with music and that the candidate has chosen their music wisely and listened to it attentively.

The most successful investigations looked at a small, carefully chosen range of repertoire, placing it in context, with some background information.

Weaker investigations often made very little reference to any musical repertoire, other than in passing. Whilst the development of a musical instrument can result in a successful investigation and report, this is only the case if a study of the repertoire of the instrument is the main focus, not solely how the instrument is constructed and has changed over time.

A small number of reports had very little to do with music at all, taking as their starting point or title a scientific, historical or social topic. Areas such as music therapy do not lead to discussion of musical repertoire and candidates therefore do not gain high marks in many of the categories in the assessment criteria.

Whilst there are obvious reasons for a candidate choosing to investigate the music on a favourite album, reports of this nature were often lacking in contextual information, with only a superficial look at the tracks on the album.

The weakest reports were often very short, only about 1000 words, rather than the required approximately 2500 words and were usually not accompanied by a CD. Youtube or other internet links listed in a bibliography are not a substitute for a CD. It is also imperative that some identification of the tracks on the CD is given in the report. Whilst 30 minutes of music should be studied, inevitably not all 30 minutes will be discussed in detail in the report; the strongest candidates select the material to discuss in detail, with the remainder serving to place it in context and for comparison.

Centres are reminded that an investigation should not be into an area covered in Paper 1.

Candidates who discussed a number of pieces of music in detail often used wide-ranging technical terms confidently and accurately and it was easy to hear what they were referring to in the music on the accompanying CD. Candidates should be encouraged to give CD timings of key features they want to draw attention to, in order to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Technical terms relating to texture were most often incorrectly used, with some candidates confusing homophonic and polyphonic. Candidates who did not discuss repertoire very much (or at all) in their reports, or who enclosed a CD, but did not refer to it, obviously did not have the opportunity to display their knowledge of technical vocabulary.